

Patent claims

1. A method for storing and retrieving a number of PIN codes for protected-access devices, comprising steps for storing the PIN codes, namely
 - entering and at least briefly storing an access code,
 - entering and storing at least one PIN code of a protected-access device,
 - entering and storing at least one unique feature of at least one protected-access device,
 - producing a link between one of the stored PIN codes and the stored unique feature of that device with protected access through the relevant PIN code; andsteps for retrieving a certain stored PIN code, namely
 - entering the access code,
 - entering the unique feature of the protected-access device associated with the PIN code to be retrieved,
 - testing whether the access code is permissible,
 - testing whether the entered unique feature matches one of the stored unique features, and
 - if both tests turn out positive, outputting the stored PIN code linked with the unique feature.
2. A method according to claim 1, characterized in that the stored access code is stored permanently and the permissibility of the entered access code is tested with reference to a comparison with the permanently stored access code.
3. A method according to either of claims 1 and 2, characterized in that the access code and/or unique features and/or PIN codes are stored in encoded form.
4. A method according to claim 3, characterized in that the access code is used as a key for encoded storage.
5. A method according to claim 4, characterized in that the access code is stored only briefly and deleted after encoding has taken place.

6. A method according to any of claims 1 to 5, characterized in that the linking between the unique feature of a protected-access device and the associated PIN code is effected by encoding the PIN code, the unique feature forming the key.
7. A method according to any of claims 1 to 6, characterized in that the access code and/or unique features and/or PIN codes are stored in externally inaccessible memory areas.
8. A method according to any of claims 1 to 7, characterized in that the particular serial number of the protected-access device is used as the unique feature.
9. A method according to any of claims 1 to 7, characterized in that a characteristic physical property of the protected-access device is used as the unique feature.
10. A method according to any of claims 1 to 9, characterized in that the particular unique feature is automatically determined and entered.
11. A method according to any of claims 1 to 10, characterized in that the output of the PIN code is made available only for a limited time period.
12. A method according to any of claims 1 to 11, characterized in that the protected-access devices are smart cards and/or magnetic stripe cards.
13. A method according to any of claims 1 to 12, characterized in that a wrong PIN code not stored is outputted if one of the two tests turns out negative.
14. An apparatus (20) for storing and retrieving a number of PIN codes for protected-access devices (10), comprising
 - a keyboard (26) for entering the PIN codes and an access code,
 - a device for receiving unique features of the protected-access devices (10),
 - at least one memory for at least briefly storing the access code, storing the PIN codes and storing the unique features,
 - a device for testing an entered access code as to its permissibility and comparing an entered unique feature with stored unique features, and
 - a display (25) for indicating retrieved PIN codes.
15. An apparatus according to claim 14, characterized in that the apparatus (20) is a pocket card reader.

16. An apparatus according to claim 13 or 14, characterized in that a device for encoding the PIN codes and/or unique features and/or access code is provided.
17. An apparatus according to any of claims 14 to 16, characterized in that externally inaccessible memory areas are provided for storing the PIN codes and/or unique features and/or access code.
18. An apparatus according to any of claims 14 to 17, characterized in that the keyboard (26) forms the device for receiving the unique features.
19. An apparatus according to any of claims 14 to 17, characterized in that the device for receiving the unique features includes a device for automatically determining the unique features of the access-protected devices.